

Susanne Brandt, Zukunftsbibliotheken, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany

HANDPRINTS AND FOOTSTEPS WITH A VISION: CREATIVE IDEAS ON THE SDGs WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Summary: In her presentation, Susanne Brandt emphasizes the role of libraries in preparing children for an uncertain future and in fostering their imagination of possible and alternative futures. The UNESCO approach of Futures Literacy is highlighted. Libraries should empower children's and young adults' capabilities for anticipation and change. They can discover and share possibilities to think, participate, and change for the present and possible futures through stories, communication, social skills, and information. Brandt identifies six important elements in this process: All Senses, Questions, Imagination, Community, Hope, and Courage. She provides examples of projects that illustrate these concepts in practice. In conclusion, she emphasizes resourcefulness of children's libraries to stimulate action oriented visionary thinking fostering not just the knowledge but also the perceptiveness and active relationship to the world as a whole.

Key words: Children, Futures Literacy, Library, Participatory project, Sustainable Development, UN Agenda2030

With handprints and footsteps, we are able to change the world. And libraries are a very important part of this process. What does this mean for our daily practice in libraries for children and families? Some inspirations to think about: First, some words about the background for what we are doing. One UNESCO approach that has been on my mind for a while is called Futures Literacy. The approach reminds us that we cannot know the one future. Because we live in uncertain times—all over the world.

The term Futures Literacy mimics the idea of reading and writing literacy because it is a skill that everyone can and should learn. Futures Literacy is the skill that allows people “to better understand the role of the future in what they see and do”.¹ Being futures literate empowers the imagination and possibilities for a change.

HOW DO WE LEARN TO LIVE IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD?

What we need is a deeper connection to this world. And that is what we can experience with children—today! Imagining possible futures—that means: deepening our own imagination and connection to the world today. And that is what we can do in libraries: discover and share with young people possibilities to think, participate and change for the present and for possible futures – with stories, communication, social skills and information.

Lienhard Valentin, a mindfulness exactor says: “We best prepare children for a future that is still unknown today not by teaching them [...], but by supporting forces within them.”² How exactly? The answer to that is always different. But there are 6 important elements that can be found in the following examples: All Senses – Questions – Imagination – Community – Hope – Courage.

¹ UNESCO, Futures Literacy, <https://www.unesco.org/en/futures-literacy>.

² Lienhard Valentin, *Mit Kindern neue Wege gehen* (Freiamt: Arbor Verlag, 2005).

With other words: “We have recognized that we live and learn **in** a world. Our pedagogies no longer position the world ‘out-there’ as the object learning about. Learning to become with the world is a situated practice and a more-than-human pedagogical collaboration.”³

The meaning of this in practice is illustrated by the following examples from recent years..

FIRST PROJECT: “THE BLANK PAGE”

At the beginning of the project there was one idea: The future starts by asking questions...

This is why the questions and ideas of children are important to promote peaceful coexistence around the world. We think: In public libraries, we jointly share a large treasure of stories, imaginations and songs from around the world. They invite us to discover, wonder and ask questions. We love diversity. And every day, we experience that great ideas are born through diverse questions, through imagination and through stories. Questions and ideas enable sustainable development. The goals of the SDGs⁴ show us where to go: in the direction of peace, justice, environmental protection and good cooperation.

The basic of our project are around 80 questions on the SDGs from children and 17 illustrations from teenagers inspired by these questions. Combined, they are a motivation to tell stories, to read, create and ask further questions.

Now, with a diverse range of activities for children in libraries in the context of these questions, they experience and deepen their own ability to shape their future and their creativity, for example through painting, inventing stories and making music:

- with the multilingual picture book *How does future actually come about?* online or as a download as Kamishibai⁵
- with 15 book boxes for the libraries about the topics of SDG
- Practical guidance with diverse book recommendations
- A collection of songs for the project
- A short film on the project with music and illustrations of the teenagers

With these materials and the pictures from the book, school children in Pozega in Serbia created a presentation right on their market square. On different boards visitors were invited to read the questions from the book and the sustainable development goal they belong to.

SECOND PROJECT: “THE WORLD ON YOUR DOORSTEP”

The situation of this project in spring 2020 was like this: The pandemic has changed everyday life. Suddenly so many things are no longer possible. Other challenges and feelings determine thinking, acting and making decisions: compassion, care, solidarity, but also fears and tension, loneliness and longing for freedom, conflicts, restlessness and patience, hope for the future and the provisionality of all plans.

³ Common Worlds Research Collective, Learning to become with the world: Education for future survival (UNESCO, 2020), 8, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374032>.

⁴ More to read about the UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals: <https://www.unicef.org/sustainable-development-goals#17-goals>.

⁵ <https://www.bilingual-picturebooks.org/en/book-detail?buch=12>

Children experience all these things too. At the same time, families now spend more time together in a confined space than usual. There is no magic formula that promises help in this situation. But there are experiences and resources that have already proven to be helpful for body and soul in other global crisis: movement is one of them. And experiencing nature. By looking over your own four walls, into the wide sky, up to the tops of the trees or deeper into the astonishing connections of life on your own doorstep, you can strengthen your compassion, the relationship and connection to the world. In so many ways you can find such freedom for movement, sensory perception and body experience, which are connected with stories and offer surprising narrative events.

Because linguistic development and creativity depend on real contact with the environment. This can also be done indoors – but movement and perception under the sky, the resonance of encounter with nature, with the familiar environment as well as with the unknown and amazing, stimulate the imagination and the desire to tell. Here are just a few examples of what can happen outside:

- an emotional connection to the living around us, delightful and vulnerable
- the understanding of relationships through recognizable changes and cycles in nature
- the search for meaning in such contexts and through your own questions
- become familiar with a set of symbols to interpret the world
- astonishment and finding in dialogue with adults as sensitive companions.⁶

One Part of the project was to create a “5-finger story” – with things that children and adults can see and name on their doorstep or behind their windows – here in northern Germany as well as in Serbia. And one day, we created a story from the words we had collected together, a story in two languages.⁷

THIRD PROJECT: “STORY TRAILS”

The idea was born in the time of corona pandemic too, inspired by the us-american StoryWalks® and brought to fruition in the environment of libraries in Schleswig-Holstein. With Story Trails, libraries open up creative possibilities at various locations to discover, experience and create stories and themes together outdoors. Stations with pictures and texts in a variety of forms – distributed in shop windows, in the garden, in the courtyard, in the park, on the playground, in public space – bring people into a lively exchange with each other, with the environment and with media. The thematic and creative possibilities are inexhaustible.

The specially developed exhibition principle for narrative paths with flexibly usable interchangeable frames opens up new possibilities for libraries to discover, design and accompany a variety of topics and stories together, both outdoors and indoors. Special opportunities lie in linking digital and physical media and encounter experiences.⁸ Together, we are united by the idea of bringing stories and themes outside, so that they can be read “by the way”.⁹

⁶ Susanne Brandt, ““The world on your doorstep ...””: Ideas to explore nature with stories and creativity, 2020, https://www.ifla.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/assets/hq/topics/libraries-development/documents/english_version_the_world_on_your_doorstep.pdf. Website of the project: <https://www.bz-sh.de/kernthemen/nachhaltig-erzaehlen>.

⁷ A Serbian story can be read here: <https://waldworte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Version-Serbisch.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.erzaehlwege.de/projekt/>

In the meantime, there are also examples of it in Serbia: <https://www.facebook.com/bibliotekapozega/>.

⁹ More to read: www.erzaehlwege.de

FOURTH EXAMPLE: “HANDPRINT FOR A BETTER WORLD”

Handprint is a free model (CC licence), open for variations and further developments, which was suggested as an idea by 10-year-old Srijia in 2007 and presented at the 4th UNESCO International Conference on Environmental Education in Ahmedabad, India. It helps to illustrate what we can helpfully contribute to sustainable development.

Handprint means an image that does not primarily describe the damage that our lifestyle causes, but rather stimulates visions of possibilities for change. The Center for Environment Education (CEE) in India developed the handprint as an open concept that anyone can use and develop individually. Ten-year-old Srijia designed the hand as a symbol of positive action as part of a CEE sustainability project.

The following “handprint” variation combines the international concept¹⁰ with two other models from international education for sustainable development:

- The “5 P's” as core messages of the 17 SDGs: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, Partnership;
- The “5 key talents”: empathy, creativity, communication skills, curiosity, problem-solving skills

Applied to the picture of our hands, this means: One hand stands for the “what”: What can we shape and change? The other hand stands for the “how”: How can we change something with our options for action, feelings and behavior?

The aim is to make it easier to talk to each other and to provide a concrete, but at the same time creative and open-ended framework for exchange, participation and the development of ideas. The results and thoughts can not only be put into words, but also expressed with various artistic means – in words, music or pictures. An idea that can be easily implemented anywhere: We try to express our ideas and visions together with different “sculptures” formed by our own hands. The results are documented as photos. All these could be the beginning of important conversations with young people in libraries.

A VISION FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW – FOR CHILDREN & LIBRARIES – FOR THE WHOLE WORLD

Birgit Schneider, a German scientist says: “I hope for culture as a space [...] where we can stretch, develop and share our feeling and imagining [...] Thinking about climate change is stuck and frozen. [...] Cultural narratives make it possible to adopt new perspectives and open doors to new spaces of imagining, thinking and feeling.”¹¹

As a result: What can children's libraries be and change for today and tomorrow?

- Libraries unfold new perspectives in projects to stimulate imagination and visionary thinking. This gradually gives rise to possibilities for action for the library's own practice as well as for the people involved in it.

¹⁰ Centre for Environmental Education, Handprint Action Towards Sustainability, International Handprint Network, <https://www.handprint.in/>.

¹¹ Birgit Schneider, *Der Anfang einer neuen Welt. Wie wir uns den Klimawandel erzählen, ohne zu verstummen* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz Berlin, 2023).

- The vitality of diverse cooperation becomes a central component of everyday library life with all its facets.
- Libraries see themselves as spaces for communication and develop suitable frameworks for cultural education and sustainable development goals (SDGs).
- In addition to knowledge, the promotion of perception is gaining in importance in a questioning and active relationship to the world around us.
- All projects remain open for further development – let’s go!

Сузан Брант, Библиотеке будућности, Шлезвиг-Холштајн, Немачка

ВИЗИОНАРСКИ ОТИСЦИ ДЛАНОВА И СТОПА: КРЕАТИВНЕ ИДЕЈЕ ЗА РАД СА ДЕЦОМ И МЛАДИМА У ВЕЗИ С ЦИЉЕВИМА ОДРЖИВОГ РАЗВОЈА

Сажетак: Полазећи од Унескове концепције писмености оријентисане ка будућностима, Сузан Брант, запослена у библиотечком удружењу Библиотеке будућности при Библиотечком центру Шлезвиг-Холштајна у Немачкој, наглашава улогу коју библиотеке могу да одиграју у образовању деце за неизвесну будућност, подстичући их да замишљају могуће и алтернативне будућности. Библиотеке треба да јачају способности деце и младих да предвиђају и мењају, да користе приче, комуникацију, друштвене вештине и информације како би их подстакле да промишљају, учествују, мењају садашњост зарад могућих будућности. Притом Брант идентификује шест елемената важних за развијање овог процеса едукације усклађеног са циљевима одрживог развоја: укључивање свих чула, запитаност, машта, заједница, нада и смелост. Затим даје примере четири пројекта који практично илуструју ове појмове: „Празна страница“, „Свет на твом прагу“, „Траговима приче“ и „Отисак длана за бољу будућност“. У закључку сумира улогу дечјих библиотека у подстицању не само сазнајног већ и осетљивог активног односа према свету и окружењу.

Кључне речи: Агенда 2030, библиотека, деца, партиципативни пројекти, писменост оријентисана ка будућностима, циљеви одрживог развоја.